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FDOT workshop draws big crowd

BY SCOTT UNGER
Key West Citizen

A standing room only crowd gave input on three options for the section of South Roosevelt Boulevard that runs along Smathers Beach at a public workshop Tuesday at the Sheraton Suites.

The options include leaving the roadway as it is, reducing the four lane road to two lanes with a center turn lane and medians, or reducing to two lanes with designated lanes on each side for bicycles and emergency vehicles.

Officials with the Florida Department Of Transportation

"We think there may be an opportunity to look at the design and tweak it a little bit to fit today's standards."

Thaddeus Cohen
Key West planning director

made a short presentation and asked residents to place green and red stickers next to their preferred option and biggest concerns in order to gauge public interest. The data will be used to make a recommendation to the Key West City Commission, according to FDOT Spokesperson Tish Burgher.

The repurposing study is the final 'improvement' to Roosevelt

Boulevard that began with a 1999 study. An improvement project focusing on drainage issues and reconstructing the promenade has already been approved and will coincide with any other work that may be done, according to FDOT Intermodal Systems Developer Ken Jefferies.

The Key West Planning Department asked for the study

following a 2014 FDOT guidelines change called the Complete Streets Policy, which "requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation."

"We think there may be an opportunity to look at the design and tweak it a little bit to fit today's standards," said Key West Planning Director Thaddeus Cohen.

If the current configuration remains, bicycle stickers called

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Boulevard

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sharrows will be installed on the roadway to indicate a shared road and two additional crosswalks will be installed near the entrance to Key West International Airport and the entrance to Las Brisas Condominiums, according to Project Architect Rod Shanmugan.

Other options include making the road one lane in each direction, with a dedicated bike lane and center turn lane. One of those

options also includes landscaped medians to beautify the corridor, Shanmugan said.

City Commissioners Margaret Romero and Billy Wardlow both brought up issues with the medians for emergency vehicle access.

"I think the medians are going to make a hazard for everything out there," Wardlow said.

The medians would be outfitted with mountable curbs and can feature small palm trees or grass so emergency vehicles could

easily get around them, Shanmugan said.

"Grass isn't all that exciting," called out one member of the crowd.

The third option would also reduce the roadway to two lanes, with no middle turn lane, instead providing dedicated bike lanes on both sides that could be used for emergency vehicles, Shanmugan said.

Studies show reducing the corridor to two lanes would keep the area below capacity for traffic, Shanmugan said.

"We can have two lanes and still have a viable level

of service along this corridor," he said. "Even up to the 2040 traffic levels you do not have enough traffic to reach capacity."

Regardless of the chosen option, the bridle path will not be affected and the speed limit won't change, Jefferies said.

A public hearing will be held in January and FDOT is expected to make a recommendation to the commission sometime next spring, Burgher said.

Work is expected to begin in July, 2018, Jefferies said.

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